



Scholarship Fund of Alexandria Surprises T.C. Senior Sara Abbas with \$40,000 Scholarship Inaugural 4-Year “Titans in Tech” Scholarship funded by Titan Alum Brett Sirois

ALEXANDRIA, VA APRIL 6, 2021 – The Scholarship Fund of Alexandria (SFA) surprised 2021 T.C. Williams graduate Sara Abbas with its largest scholarship worth \$40,000 during a Zoom call. Brett Sirois, 2007 Titan Alum, founder and chief recruiter with Stem IT, and creator and funder of the scholarship joined the call to surprise and congratulate Abbas. The scholarship will support Abbas through all four years of college.

ACPS Superintendent and former SFA scholarship recipient Gregory C. Hutchings, Jr., T.C. Williams High School Principal Peter Balas, SFA Executive Director Beth Lovain and SFA staff joined in the surprise announcement. Abbas thought she was participating in an interview for scholarship eligibility during the call and was instead surprised with a \$40,000 scholarship check.

“This scholarship is a relief. My family struggled financially due to the COVID pandemic. The scholarship will relieve a major burden for my family and me. It will enable me to focus on my education and the goal I have set of graduating Summa Cum Laude. It will help me expand my expectations for myself,” said Abbas. “The Titans in Tech Scholarship will also allow me to invest more time in my work with the National Society of Black Engineers and in mentoring middle school girls in technology. I tell the students that I mentor to keep pushing and to never give up, and this is why,” said Abbas.

Thanks to the scholarship, Sara Abbas will study computer science at Virginia Tech next fall. She began her ACPS career at William Ramsay Elementary School and was an outstanding student at T.C. Williams over the last four years carrying a heavy course load of AP and DE classes. She served as vice-president of the Future Business Leaders of America at TC, as a TechGirlBoss Ambassador, an Arabic tutor, teaching assistant and Treasurer of the National Society of Black Engineers’ T.C. chapter. She is the first generation in her family to attend college.

“As a TC Alum and Alexandria native, I wanted to find a way to give back to the community that helped me get to where I am today,” said Titans in Tech scholarship creator Brett Sirois. “This scholarship was created to help a student like Sara jumpstart their career in technology and I’m happy to play a small part in her future success. Sara has worked so hard to get so far already, I have no doubt that the sky is the limit for her,” added Sirois.



In her SFA scholarship application, Abbas said she believes in the strong link between technology and power and the need to make computer science accessible to all students. As an aspiring software engineer or app developer, she also said she is committed to breaking down barriers between marginalized communities and computer science and wants to be a role model for young girls who are POC who want to pursue tech and computer science.

“I am a Titan alum and I received a scholarship from SFA back in 1995. Sara, this scholarship helped pave the way for my success and I know it will do that for you. I am so grateful to Brett for caring enough to give back and pass his success on to future Titans,” said ACPS

Superintendent Gregory C. Hutchings Jr. “As a woman and a person of color entering the computer science world and looking to help students of color who follow behind you, I can see that you are on the way to change the world, that you are going to make a difference,” Hutchings added.

“Sara, you represent everything that our high school and being a Titan is all about. This scholarship is going to be a game-changer for you and your family. And I can see that you are going to be a game-changer too. Congratulations, Sara,” said T.C. Williams Principal Peter Balas during the call.

“We are truly thrilled to award this scholarship today. During this time when many of our students and families are facing great financial difficulties during COVID, it’s really wonderful to help a student find a way to afford college,” said SFA Executive Director Beth Lovain. “Sara is a wonderful, bright and hard-working student. Her teachers have lauded her as a natural leader, and a top performer in mathematics and the Academy of Finance.

They described her as being wise beyond her years. We are so proud of all that Sara has accomplished at T.C. and cannot wait to see just how high she can rise,” Lovain added.

The Titans in Tech Scholarship was established this year by Brett Sirois to help a T.C. Williams student with financial need afford a 4-year education in computer science at a Virginia state school. This is the first awarding of the Titans in Tech Scholarship.

This week SFA will announce the awarding of \$525,000 in scholarships to 180 students from the Class of 2021. The Scholarship Fund of Alexandria has been working to raise Emergency Funds during COVID-19 in response to increased need among low-income families in Alexandria due to COVID economics. SFA is continuing to raise money to fully fund scholarships for the Class of 2021 and to support renewal scholarships for previous scholarship winners with financial need --- former TC graduates and SFA scholarship recipients who are completing their sophomore, junior or senior year of college. SFA saw a 25% increase in scholarship applications for these continuing students last summer.



Brett Sirois & Sara Abbas meet after the Zoom.



TC Williams Class of 2021 Graduate Sara Abbas gets a surprise \$40,000 scholarship from SFA during a Zoom call.

The Scholarship Fund will hold its 35th Anniversary Spring Gala – Gala 35 – virtually on April 24th. Tickets and sponsorships are still available. The event will include a prize drawing on April 23, online silent auction, entertainment, inspiration and the Grand Prize Jack Taylor’s Alexandria Toyota Raffle drawing where one lucky winner will take home \$25K or a new 2021 Toyota RAV-4 compliments of Jack Taylor. Registration and info for the Online Auction can be found here: sfagala.givesmart.com. All proceeds will support scholarships for Alexandria students with financial need. For more information or to donate: <http://sfagala.givesmart.com/>

The SFA, a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization, was founded in 1986 to help T.C. Williams students with financial need afford college. For the past 35 years, SFA has raised funds to support college access and scholarships for students with financial need. Over the past three and a half decades, the Scholarship Fund has awarded more than \$16.5 million in scholarships and helped send nearly 5,000 local kids to college.

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